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FERRIS, M.L.

A LEGEND OF NEW YEAR EVE

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Mary Lavinia (Hauv) Ferris

Mrs. Morris Patterson Ferris

New York, 1913

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Mynheer de Peyster was fretting and fuming,
Something had not gone right,
The *Hendrick Jobn*, long overdue,
Had not yet hove in sight.

Her cargo, rum and curacoa,
With a little sugar and tea,
Were eagerly waited for just now,
It was New Year Eve, you see.

Now New Year Eye in old New York
Was the time in all the year,
When the Dutchman showed at his very best,
And his home was glad with cheer.

But New Year Eve without curacoa
Was Hamlet without the Prince;
What wonder the merchant's brow was dark,
For it was four months since

The last supply had been received,
And his stock was very low;
There was arrack, madeira, sherry and gin,
But no rum or curacoa.

But fretting and fuming won't bring ships in,
That was better known than now—
They had waited five months for the *Beverwyck*,
And six for the *Spotted Cow*.

G.H.

Anthony

MAR 16 1918

Yet faith was strong in those halcyon days,
In good Saint Nicholas,
Who always stood ready to help them out,
If the worst should come to pass.

Silently smoking, the merchant stood
In his door near Bowling Green,
Gazing at Nutten Island, where
The city's cows were seen.

Across the street from his bakeshop near
Came striding Teunis de Kay,
Having finished the Olijkoeks, large and round,
He'd been baking for New Year Day.

"Mynheer, can you sight her yet?" he cried,

"Schuyler, the trader's come in

"For half a keg of New Year cakes

"And a keg of Holland gin.

"Jufvrouw van Rensselaer sent you down

"A piece of Beverwyck beef,

"And Schuyler said he'd send it here

"By the skipper, Dirck van Cleef.

"The Patroon's barn burned down last month,

"And Gansevoort lost a cow,

"And Bleecker's vrouw is nigh to death,

"And it's said that Petrus Douw

"Will build a house on his State Street farm,

"And the Dominie's going soon

"To Kinderhook to baptize a boy,

"The twelfth to Peter van Loon.

"But Schuyler'll be here with the Beverwyck news,

"Tho' he hasn't long to stop,

"He'd a package and letter to leave, I think,

"At Bancker's needle shop.

"Katrina de Meyer I saw just now

"With Anthony Rutger's son,

"They're away, I suppose, to KISSING BRIDGE,

"It's the time for all such fun."

De Peyster muttered a good Dutch oath,
As he saw the smith, Brevoort,
Who exclaimed, "Mynheer, I want a keg
"Of your very best old port.

"And Madam Bogardus called me in
"To say she has no rum,
"Or curacoa for the New Year punch,
"And the Dominie's brewing some."

"Donder and Blitzzen," de Peyster said,
"Say, man, what shall I do?
"We must either trust in Saint Nicholas,
"Or call in the Goblin crew."

Lovely the earth with its ermine robe,
In the light of the silvery moon;
Crisp was the air, and the jingling bells
Made the whole scene in tune.

The Church of Saint Nicholas reared its spire
From the walls of the gray old fort,
A silent preacher for godliness
As held by the Synod of Dort.

Mynheer de Peyster raised the sash
And gave one glance toward the bay—
No sail to be seen where the eye could reach,
And something like dismay

Filled the heart of the good old man.

But stop, what noise was that?

It sounded too bold for an Indian thief,

And rather too loud for a rat.

With a tallow dip in his shaking hand,

He opened the warehouse door,

He scarce could move for the hogsheads piled,

And just to one side of the floor

Were kegs upon kegs of Jamaica rum,

The very purest, you know,

And case upon case, his dazzled eyes

Deciphered as curacoa.

And glancing up by the flickering light,
He saw a princely man,
With a face benign with blessing and peace,
And the stranger then began

To speak in a voice so sweet and low
That Mynheer held his breath:
What was the matter? Was he ill?
And was the stranger Death?

"This is my New Year gift to thee
"And all Nieuw Amsterdam,
"Know that Saint Nicholas rewards
"An honest, faithful man.

"Keep my birthday each New Year,
 "Open wide every door,
"Welcome stranger and friend alike,
 "And share with them your store.

"Load your table with home brewed punch,
 "And every kind of food,
"That a Dutchman likes to look upon,
 "And see that it is good.

"Open your purse to the needy folk,
 "Give as you can afford,
"Live your life as best you can,
 'And stand by the King, your Lord.

"And if, as the city grows apace,
 "New and strange things appear,
"I surely will avenge myself
 "On every opening year."

Bright was the dawning of New Year Day,
 And at every Burgher's door
Stood a keg or two of East India brew
 That none had tasted before.

Many the calls made by Burgher on Jufvrouw,
 Many the greetings of young man and maid,
Even the children gave cakes to each other,
 On which Saint Nicholas' image was laid.

Bland was the Dominic, Madam Bogardus,
 Dressed in a gown that befitted her rank,
Heated the punch in the huge iron kettle,
 Kissing the goblet from which each one drank.

Many the sleigh rides, many the dances,
 Many the hearts brimming over with fun;
Unseen Saint Nicholas smiled at their pleasure,
 Feeling the New Year had been well begun.

Changed is this scene in this era of progress,
 Empty the punch bowl, and fast barred the door.
Madame's at Lakewood, Monsieur at Tuxedo,
 Up in the nursery one child on the floor
Munches French candy, and cries for the moon;
 Welcome the theory preached at New Haven!
Comes the Millenium, think you, too soon?
 Gone are the customs our worthy forefathers
Counted as dear as the land of their birth,
 The myth of Saint Nicholas long since exploded,
Why should the New Year be brimming with mirth?

Blessed Saint Nicholas! Surely thy vengeance
 Seemeth complete in this too rapid age,
Fashion indulgently smiles at the memory,
 Hastily turning the time-eaten page.

MARY L. D. FERRIS.

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